



2006 Fair Provides Giant Surprises; 2007 Fair dates set

The 2006 Fair began with the question of “How will school being in session affect Fair attendance?” Just as important was the question of how school sessions would affect the labor pool—since students typically constitute a large portion of the many short-term workers who help out in many categories at the Fair.

The Fair opened to two days of rainy weather, and students weren't the only patrons who did not attend. The weather improved by the weekend, however, and was not particularly harsh for the rest of the Fair. Final attendance was down 1.5% at



268,143. Although it is difficult to establish a direct correlation, it is likely that at least part of the decrease can be attributed to school days. Nevertheless, recommendations by vendors and other major Fair partners overwhelmingly preferred that the same calendar be retained for next year. Consequently, the Fair board set those dates as August 23 through September 3, 2007.

The 2007 Fair will be from August 23 through September 3, 2007.

The big news in 2006 was the size of the vegetables entered in competition. Electricity filled the Crops department when the Fair learned that Dave Iles of North Pole had rented a semi-



van to haul his vegetables to Palmer. His harvest produced five entries submitted to Guinness World Records: 84 lb.

collard greens, 14' Swiss chard, 58.6 lb. kale, 54' 5" marrow vine, and a 75' 5" gourd vine. Scott Robb is also awaiting notification on his 96.9 lb. kohlrabi. (cont. on page 2)



Happy Crops superintendent Kathy Liska accepts a new category of Giant vegetables. (Photo by Ted Bell)

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2006 Fair Provides Giant Surprises
(cont. from p. 1)

The Fair used the State of Alaska's official scales truck when the pumpkins were entered. Dave Iles' North Pole entry was 608 lbs, which was soon eclipsed by J.D Megchelsen. His Nikiski behemoth tipped the scales at 1,019 lbs. Just a few years ago this would have been a world record, but Megcheslen must comfort himself with a new State record. The Fair is now an official site of the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth, a worldwide organization that creates and maintains fair and equal guidelines.

The Crops department continues to enhance the Palmer Fair's reputation as the premier showcase for giant vegetables. Recognition by international record keepers and federations offers new incentives and challenges to Alaskan growers.



Sand sculpture develops with the Fair's moose created by W.B. Hughes. (Photo by Ted Bell)

Directors Complete Bylaws Overhaul

The signs have been present for years that the State Fair bylaws were out of date. In some cases they do not comply with State law. Minor amendments have dealt with some of the problems. But that did not prevent the questions that arose prior to the last annual meeting, and the actions that resulted in several members unable to vote.



In the mid-90s an attempt to modernize the bylaws was thwarted by a large change in the board. The current board has tried again. The rules committee met with a non-profit lawyer, and went through the document line by line. The committee laid their suggested revision before the entire board, and all directors were invited to comment. The document was then returned to the attorney for refinement. On November 9, the full board voted to provide all State Fair members a chance to comment on the revisions.

The document is being prepared for mailing to members, so that the board may have and consider their suggestions before the final presentation to members in the annual meeting packet. Members will vote on the document at the annual meeting, February 8.

Candidates Sought; Call for Membership Renewals

Two seats on the seven-member board are up for election at the annual meeting at 7:00pm on February 8 in Raven Hall.

The terms of Charlie Willis and George Lochner expire that evening. Directors serve three-year terms. The board meets the second Thursday of each month, among other duties.

Candidates must be current members of the Fair association by December 15, 2006. Memberships may be obtained by calling 745-4827 or by visiting the website www.alaskastatefair.org.

Those who wish to run for election are encouraged to call the receptionist or one of the election committee members below for further information. Candidates are welcome to apply on-line at www.alaskastatefair.org. Application packets are also available at the Main Office on the Fairgrounds, or they may be mailed upon request. Applications are due back at the main office on the fairgrounds by 4:30 pm December 15.

- ☎ Receptionist, 745-4827
- ☎ Bonnie Quill, Chair 746-5001 w
- ☎ Bruce Bush, 746-2874 h
- ☎ Mari Jo Parks, 745-5361 w
- ☎ Jerry Baker, 746-7155 w

All Fair members will have a chance to comment on the bylaws revisions.

Financial Audit for 2005 Completed

Catherine Fosselman, CPA, presented the audit of the 2005 finances at the October board meeting. Fosselman explained that because of generally accepted auditing standards she is required to operate on an accrual basis, whereas the Fair understandably operates on a cash basis. This difference resulted in increases in accounts payable of \$6,407, in utilities of \$5,340, and in program services of \$1,087 to record accounts payable at December 31, 2005. The only other adjustments dated back to the construction of the South Palmer Station. The Fair had erroneously revalued its real estate according to a property appraisal, and had increased its grounds improvements by the value of new construction in that project. The adjustment results in the 300 acres of the Fairgrounds now valued on the books as \$741,345. The appraised value of 240 of those acres in 1998 was \$2,500,000. Fixed assets were also written down when the new restrooms at the green gate were removed from the balance sheet, even though they are fully owned and managed by the Fair. However, as grant administrator, they are carried on the books of the Alaska Railroad Corporation.



Fosselman found no indication of fraud, or of deficient accounting systems. The Board of Directors unanimously accepted her report on November 9, 2006.

Ritchie Bros. Capitalizes on Fairgrounds Location

For several weeks in late September, early October, Glenn Highway commuters were awestruck by the accumulation of heavy equipment that steadily filled the Red Parking Lot. The occasion was an equipment auction conducted by Ritchie

Bros. Auctioneers, an internationally renowned auction company. And while large equipment nearly filled the Red Lot, plenty of small equipment was also found in the Don Sheldon Events Center.

Over twenty Ritchie Bros. employees from Outside were supplemented by thirty Alaskans for the sale. Many local firms were also called upon to provide services. The exercise was profitable, too. Come auction day, October 14, hundreds of eager buyers flocked to the parking lot and remained there for the entire day. The result was \$5.6 million in sales. Many sellers and many buyers alike walked away satisfied. So did Ritchie Bros. and the State Fair. The latter proved conclusively that its buildings, parking lots, high visibility, and excellent service make the fairgrounds the natural place to host crowds.

Fire Marshal OKs Barn Improvements

The Fair moved a giant step in its goal to save, improve, and eventually enclose the Farm Exhibits structure when the Fire Marshal's office agreed to series of steps that allows Fair staff to proceed with plans. Under the agreement, the tarps and wooden framing installed twenty years ago to reduce the wind whistling through the building will be replaced with steel siding. Hard upon that task, the exit doors must be brought into compliance.

In 2005 an Enclosure study with preliminary engineering was completed, along with an economic feasibility study. To follow the recommendations and sequences described therein, the Fair sought permission from the State Fire Marshal to proceed. The Fair has in hand the greater part of A HUD grant, a USDA grant, and two State Capital grants that total nearly \$90,000.

The Fair board is committed to finish the building that was abandoned by the State Legislature in 1982. It's potential to the Mat-Su region is unquestionable, but changing Fire Codes leave the structure vulnerable to condemnation if nothing is done. The board seeks to bring the building into a focal point for the Fiftieth Anniversary Statehood Celebration at the 2009 Fair.

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Delta Junction Farmers Honored

The 2006 Farm Family of the Year was announced Directors' Reception on opening day, August 24. This year's recipients were the Wrigley family, farmers in Delta Junction since they moved from Idaho in 1983. Joining Rex and Shirlene Wrigley for the ceremony in Palmer was their son Steven.

The Wrigleys raised hogs and potatoes in past years, but barley is now the primary crop. They farm about 2500 acres—two-thirds of which they own. Another son, Bryce, and his family still work on the Farm.

The award is now in its seventh year. Previous recipients of the recognition have come from Palmer, Eagle River, and Ester.



Rex, Shirlene, and Stephen Wrigley: Alaska Farm Family for 2006. (Photo by Ted Bell)

Palmer's Classiest Event



Dust off your dancing shoes, cut your hair, polish up your best stories, and get ready for a memorable evening at the Holiday Ball. Fair staff has again transformed Raven Hall into an exquisite winter fairyland. Serving up the listening and dance tunes is Chill Factor with John Tracy—back by popular demand. Close-in parking, coat check, hors d'oeuvres, and a no-host bar are included in the offerings. Hours are 8 pm to midnight on Friday, December 8.

Tickets are \$25 per person or \$160 for a table of eight. They are available at the Fair Main Office at cost, or at Fairtix.net with a service fee. This is the perfect event to share with your sweetheart, a group of friends, or as a holiday party for the office or jobsite. The dance floor is spacious, the food is tasty, and the decorations elegant. The hall is comfortable and conversation not difficult over the music. Call Donna at 746-7161 for more information on a night to remember.



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